

**Chairman's Speech  
January 5, 2004  
Andrew Kunasek**

I want to thank my fellow members for this honor.

Before I talk about next year, I want to thank Supervisor Brock for leading us this past year. Supervisor Brock, we have a plaque for you -- a small token of our esteem and appreciation (present to Supervisor Brock).

Mr. Brock has been too modest in his assessment of his leadership last year. There is no question that Maricopa County faced many challenges during your chairmanship and, Fulton, you led this board and this county through them with the great finesse and diplomacy we've all come to expect and admire in you. I am grateful to you, and I know our fellow members and the county staff are grateful as well.

This year will be as challenging as any other for this board. We have many issues to address including the transition of the Maricopa Integrated Health System; the constant strain to our criminal justice system; crime prevention; land use; trails; and the continuing budget crisis at the state level.

As we all know, last year the state more or less presented us with a bill for \$53M over two years -- a kind of debt relief "contribution", if you want to call it that. I want to thank House Speaker Jake Flake and the other members at the legislature who know the difference between right and wrong. Without their support, Maricopa County and, more importantly its taxpayers, would have had their pockets picked for even more money.

I do not expect the state government to be in much better financial shape this year, and therefore, we must recognize as a board that we will continue to face fiscal challenges in FY 2004-2005. Our revenue growth is forecasted to improve modestly, along with the national and state economy, however, the County's costs for providing mandated services are projected to increase as well.

Keeping this in mind, the Board has already set conservative budget priorities and guidelines for the next budget. While we are not asking departments to submit budget reductions this year, we will not consider many new funding requests outside of issues related to our adult and juvenile jail programs.

I've also asked the County Administrator, Senior Staff and the Office of Management and Budget to again seek out opportunities for spending reductions and streamlining of county functions. It is my intention that any savings we achieve will help us build a reserve to address employee compensation issues that have been largely put on hold for the past two years. Our employees are what make this government run, and run well. Maricopa County was not voted

the best run county in the entire United States just because of good leadership. It's also the folks dealing with constituents one-on-one; the folks building and maintaining our roads; inspecting construction sites; giving immunizations; caring for lost pets; arresting and prosecuting criminals; curing the sick; and handling the millions of documents this government is responsible for.

Top amongst our priorities must be the smooth transition of the Maricopa Integrated Healthcare System to an independent district with an independently elected board of directors. The Board of Supervisors has already laid out a conceptual framework for how that transition will take place. Let me reiterate here the guiding principals by which I intend to lead this transition.

My fellow board members and I believe strongly that the Maricopa Integrated Health system is an essential thread in the fabric of the Valley community's healthcare network. We will continue to treat the turnover with the greatest of care and concern for the system's ability to operate without any decrease in service levels. Furthermore, I believe that it is our moral responsibility to support the system financially even after the new directors are installed until such time as the system can generate its own revenues. This is not, of course, a blank check, but recognition that the system will need our financial assistance during its first 6 -months as an independent government.

For decades, every chairman has mentioned in his or her yearly address the ever-present problems of jail overcrowding and logjams in our criminal justice system. Building more jails and adding courts is an answer, but it is not the only answer. I am very proud of Maricopa County's ongoing efforts at crime prevention. The County Attorney, the Sheriff, and the courts have done a great deal to address prevention and recidivism. Recently we were selected as one of the federal Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention sites to implement Targeted Community Action Planning. As a chosen site by the federal government we will receive technical assistance free of charge by experts across the nation. Though targeted at the juvenile population, our action planning will include adults as well. I hope that we will be able to report more advances in crime prevention at this same time next year.

I also intend to look carefully at some of the health issues that have been brought to my attention.

One issue is mobile food vendors who have failed to obtain a mobile food vendor license. To combat this potential health problem, we will add additional employees to our mobile food vendor enforcement program immediately. We will also be adding additional resources to combat the mosquito problem this summer.

I don't believe that this entire year will be about challenges. I anticipate that we will have much to celebrate as well.

We are on track to completely retire our General Obligation Debt by July of this year. The lack of long-term debt will make Maricopa County unique among government's nationwide.

Along with Sheriff Arpio we plan to open the new Madison Street Jail this year as well as part of Human Services Campus and the hopefully a downtown farmer's market. We also hope to have the entire trail Regional Trail alignment designated by the end of this year. As most of you know, this regional trail will be a complete trail surrounding the entire valley and linking Maricopa County's Regional Parks.

I want to say one last thing about parks. Although it is a non-mandated service, our parks and recreation areas are some of the most important services we provide. I want to work hard this year to identify additional resources for our parks.

Again, this year will have many challenges and opportunities. There are some we've anticipated, some we cannot. I have great faith in this board, county staff, the other elected officials countywide and the citizens of Maricopa County. Together there is nothing we cannot accomplish if we work together.

Thank you."